



## Transformation of the *Aqidah-Akhlak* Learning Approach: From the Content-Based Curriculum (K13) to the Competency-Based Curriculum in the Merdeka Curriculum at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta*

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### KEYWORDS

*Aqidah Akhlak* Learning, Curriculum Transformation, Competency-Based Curriculum, Merdeka Curriculum.

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approach from the Content-Based Curriculum of the 2013 Curriculum (K13) to the Competency-Based approach implemented in the *Merdeka* Curriculum at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta*. The research aims to analyze how the shift in curriculum orientation influences the learning process, student engagement, and the development of students' moral and religious competencies. The study employs a qualitative research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the implementation of the new learning paradigm in *Aqidah Akhlak* instruction. The methodology used in this research is a qualitative case study. Data were collected through classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and documentation. The research involved 30 students as the primary participants, along with supporting information obtained from teachers and learning documents. The data analysis process was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to identify patterns of change in learning approaches and student responses to the curriculum transformation. The results of the study indicate that the implementation of the Competency-Based approach in the Merdeka Curriculum significantly enhances students' active participation and character development in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning. Approximately 83% of students demonstrated improved engagement during interactive and competency-oriented learning activities, while 78% showed better understanding of moral values through contextual learning methods. In addition, about 80% of students exhibited increased critical thinking and reflective attitudes toward ethical and religious issues discussed in class. These findings suggest that the transformation from a content-oriented learning model to a competency-based approach contributes positively to the effectiveness of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning and supports the development of students' character and moral awareness.

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## Introduction

Islamic religious education in madrasahs plays a strategic role in shaping students' character, morality, and religious personality. The subject of *Aqidah Akhlak* serves as an

essential instrument in building the foundation of students' faith and ethical behavior. The learning process of *Aqidah Akhlak* does not merely emphasize the cognitive aspects related to the concepts of faith and morality, but also focuses on the formation of attitudes and behaviors reflected in daily life. Changes in the educational paradigm demand religious learning that is more contextual, participatory, and capable of encouraging the deeper internalization of Islamic values (Azra, 2021: 87).

The development of educational policies in *Indonesia* indicates a significant transition from the 2013 Curriculum to the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The 2013 Curriculum tends to emphasize a content-based curriculum approach that focuses on the mastery of learning materials. The *Merdeka* Curriculum promotes a competency-based curriculum that emphasizes the development of students' skills, attitudes, and critical thinking abilities. This shift encourages teachers to design learning that is more flexible, student-centered, and oriented toward the holistic achievement of competencies (Kemendikbudristek, 2022: 14).

The transformation of the curriculum has direct implications for classroom learning processes, including the teaching of *Aqidah Akhlak* in madrasahs. Teachers are required to develop learning strategies that not only convey textual materials but also encourage students to understand, reflect upon, and apply moral values in real-life contexts. More interactive and reflective learning approaches play an important role in supporting the goals of character education promoted by the *Merdeka* Curriculum (Suyadi & Widodo, 2022: 55).

*Aqidah Akhlak* learning has distinctive characteristics because it is closely related to the formation of values and morality. A one-way instructional approach that primarily emphasizes memorization of materials often proves ineffective in developing students' moral awareness. The development of competency-based learning approaches enables students to actively participate in the learning process through activities such as discussions, value reflection, and the resolution of ethical problems relevant to their social lives (Huda, 2023: 118).

The shift in learning approaches within the *Merdeka* Curriculum encourages a transformation of the pedagogical paradigm that positions students as active subjects in the learning process. Learning is no longer limited to the transmission of information, but focuses on the development of critical, collaborative, and reflective competencies. This approach aligns with the demands of twenty-first century education, which requires the integration of knowledge, skills, and character values (Anshori, 2020: 203).

Several previous studies have indicated that the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum has a positive influence on increasing student engagement in the learning process. Research conducted by Suryana (2021: 64) revealed that competency-based learning is capable of enhancing student participation and strengthening reflective thinking abilities in religious education. The study highlights the importance of pedagogical transformation to support the effective implementation of the new curriculum.

Another study conducted by Rahman and Hakim (2022: 91) found that competency-based learning in Islamic religious education encourages students to become more active in understanding moral values through contextual learning approaches. This approach provides opportunities for students to connect learning materials with their real-life experiences. The findings indicate that participatory learning approaches can improve students' understanding of moral values.

Research conducted by Fauzi (2023: 142) emphasizes that curriculum change requires teachers' readiness to adapt more innovative teaching methods. Teachers play an important role in transforming learning from a material-oriented approach to a competency-oriented

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approach. Teachers' pedagogical competence becomes a crucial factor in determining the success of the new curriculum implementation in madrasahs.

A study by Prasetyo and Sari (2024: 76) shows that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for strengthening character education through project-based learning and value reflection. This learning model enables students to develop critical thinking skills and deeper *moral* awareness. Such an approach represents an important strategy in the teaching of *Aqidah Akhlak*.

These studies illustrate the importance of competency-based learning approaches in Islamic religious education. Most of these studies focus on the general implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum. Research that specifically examines the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches from a content-based curriculum to a competency-based curriculum in the *madrasah* context remains limited.

The limitations of previous studies indicate the existence of a research gap that requires further investigation. The transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches represents an important issue because it is closely related to changes in the paradigm of moral education in madrasahs. An in-depth examination of this pedagogical shift can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in the context of Islamic education.

*Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta* is one of the educational institutions that has begun implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum in its learning process. This implementation provides an opportunity to examine how the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches occurs in actual classroom practices. The institutional context offers empirical insights into the changes in teaching strategies adopted by teachers. This study aims to analyze in depth the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches from a content-based orientation to a competency-based approach. The analysis seeks to understand how curriculum changes influence instructional design, teaching methods, and student engagement in the learning process of *Aqidah Akhlak*.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on examining pedagogical transformation in *Aqidah Akhlak* learning as a consequence of national curriculum reform. This study does not merely discuss the general implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum, but specifically investigates the shift in learning approaches within the *Aqidah Akhlak* subject in madrasahs.

This research also contributes theoretically to the development of Islamic education studies, particularly regarding the transformation of competency-based learning approaches. The findings are expected to enrich academic perspectives on *Aqidah Akhlak* learning strategies that are more relevant to contemporary educational *paradigms*. The practical contribution of this study is expected to serve as a reference for teachers, madrasah administrators, and educational policymakers in developing more effective *Aqidah Akhlak* learning models. The research findings can serve as a basis for designing instructional strategies that integrate knowledge mastery, character development, and the enhancement of students' moral competencies.

## Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with the aim of gaining an in-depth understanding of the transformation process of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches from a content-based approach to a competency-based approach in the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. A qualitative approach was selected because this study focuses on

understanding educational phenomena contextually through the interpretation of classroom practices, teachers' experiences, and students' responses during the learning process. This approach enables the researcher to obtain a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of changes in learning approaches within the *madrasah* environment (Creswell, 2020: 45).

The research design employed in this study is a qualitative case study. This design is used to explore in depth the transformation practices of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches within the context of a particular educational institution. A case study provides an opportunity for the researcher to analyze educational phenomena holistically in a real-life setting, enabling a more comprehensive description of the curriculum implementation process (Yin, 2021: 62).

The purpose of this study is to analyze the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches from a content-based learning model under the 2013 Curriculum to a competency-based approach in the Merdeka Curriculum. The study also aims to identify the learning strategies employed by teachers, the level of student engagement in the learning process, and the implications of curriculum changes for strengthening students' moral values (Sugiyono, 2022: 118).

The evaluation model used in this research is the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product). This *model* is employed to analyze the implementation of learning transformation systematically through four main dimensions: the context of curriculum policy, the readiness of educational resources, the learning processes that occur in the classroom, and the learning outcomes achieved by students. The CIPP evaluation model is considered relevant for comprehensively examining the implementation of educational programs (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2020: 89).

This research was conducted at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta*, located in *Surakarta* City, Central Java. The selection of this research site was based on the consideration that the *madrasah* has begun implementing the *Merdeka* Curriculum in its learning process. This institutional setting provides an empirical context relevant to examining the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches within the practice of Islamic religious education (Moleong, 2021: 156).

The research subjects consisted of teachers and students who participated in the learning process. The study involved 30 students *Aqidah Akhlak* as the primary participants in order to obtain information regarding their learning experiences in *Aqidah Akhlak* instruction. The participants were selected using purposive sampling by considering their involvement in the observed learning activities (Patton, 2021: 233).

The validity of the data was ensured through triangulation techniques to enhance the credibility of the research findings. Triangulation was conducted through source triangulation, technique triangulation, and time triangulation. Source triangulation was carried out by comparing information obtained from teachers, students, and learning documents. Technique triangulation was conducted through a combination of observation, interviews, and documentation methods (Denzin & Lincoln, 2021: 134).

Data collection techniques in this study included observation, interviews, and documentation. Observations were conducted to directly examine the *Aqidah Akhlak* learning process in the classroom. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and students to obtain deeper insights into their learning experiences. Documentation was used to examine learning instruments such as teaching modules, lesson plans, and curriculum documents used in the *madrasah* (Creswell, 2020: 156).

The research procedure was conducted through several systematic stages. The first stage was the preparation stage, which included a literature review, the development of research instruments, and obtaining research permission from the institution. The second stage involved data collection through classroom observations, interviews with research informants, and the collection of learning documents related to the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*.

The next stage involved data analysis through the processes of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing information relevant to the research objectives. Data display was presented in the form of narrative descriptions to illustrate the transformation process of the learning approaches. Conclusion drawing was conducted through the interpretation of patterns and relationships among the data obtained during the research process (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2020: 12).

The final stage of the research procedure was the preparation of the research report containing the results of the analysis concerning the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches from a content-based approach to a competency-based approach in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum*. The report was systematically organized to provide a clear description of learning practices in the *madrasah* and their implications for the development of Islamic religious education at the secondary school level.

## Result

This study analyzes the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approach from a content-based curriculum under the 2013 Curriculum to a competency-based curriculum in the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta*. The analysis was conducted using the CIPP evaluation model (Context, Input, Process, Product) in order to obtain a comprehensive overview of policy readiness, educational resources, learning implementation, and student learning outcomes in *Aqidah Akhlak* instruction (Stufflebeam & Zhang, 2020: 94).

The study involved 30 students as the primary respondents and the *Aqidah Akhlak* teacher as a key informant. Data were collected through classroom observations, in-depth interviews, and documentation of instructional materials. The research findings are presented in four components of the CIPP evaluation model to illustrate the level of success of the transformation of learning approaches in the *madrasah* (Creswell, 2020: 167).

### 1. Context Evaluation

**Table 1. Context Evaluation Component Scores**

| No      | Context Components                                    | Maximum Score | Obtained Score | Percentage |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 1       | Alignment with the <i>Merdeka Curriculum</i> policy   | 100           | 85             | 85%        |
| 2       | Need for learning transformation                      | 100           | 88             | 88%        |
| 3       | Institutional support of the <i>madrasah</i>          | 100           | 82             | 82%        |
| 4       | Relevance of <i>Aqidah Akhlak</i> learning objectives | 100           | 86             | 86%        |
| Average |                                                       |               | 85.25          | 85%        |

The context evaluation indicates that the implementation of the *Merdeka Curriculum* in

*Aqidah Akhlak* learning falls into the very good category with an average score of 85%. This finding shows that the curriculum policy implemented in the *madrasah* has strong relevance to the need for competency-based learning transformation. Learning objectives emphasize not only conceptual understanding but also the strengthening of students' moral and character values (Suyadi & Widodo, 2022: 61).

Institutional support from the *madrasah* also contributes significantly to the success of the learning transformation. A conducive academic environment and the commitment of school leadership to support the implementation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum provide opportunities for teachers to develop more innovative and contextual learning strategies (Fauzi, 2023: 144).

## 2. Input Evaluation

**Table 2. Input Evaluation Component Scores**

| No      | Input Components                        | Maximum Score | Obtained Score | Percentage |
|---------|-----------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 1       | Teacher competence                      | 100           | 84             | 84%        |
| 2       | Availability of instructional materials | 100           | 82             | 82%        |
| 3       | Student readiness                       | 100           | 80             | 80%        |
| 4       | Facilities and infrastructure           | 100           | 79             | 79%        |
| Average |                                         |               | 81.25          | 81%        |

The input evaluation shows that the readiness of educational resources falls within the good category with an average score of 81%. Teacher competence serves as a major factor supporting the transformation of learning approaches. Teachers demonstrate the ability to design learning activities based on discussion, value reflection, and collaborative tasks that encourage student participation (Rahman & Hakim, 2022: 93).

The availability of instructional materials such as teaching modules and lesson plans aligned with the *Merdeka* Curriculum also demonstrates a satisfactory level of preparedness. These learning tools are designed to support competency-based learning that emphasizes the development of critical thinking skills and the understanding of moral values in everyday life (Prasetyo & Sari, 2024: 78).

## 3. Process Evaluation

**Table 3. Process Evaluation Component Scores**

| No      | Process Components                | Maximum Score | Obtained Score | Percentage |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 1       | Active learning strategies        | 100           | 86             | 86%        |
| 2       | Teacher-student interaction       | 100           | 84             | 84%        |
| 3       | Competency-based learning methods | 100           | 87             | 87%        |
| 4       | Reflection on moral values        | 100           | 83             | 83%        |
| Average |                                   |               | 85             | 85%        |

The process evaluation demonstrates that the implementation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning has moved toward a competency-based learning approach with an average score of 85%. Active learning strategies such as group discussions, case studies, and value reflection provide

opportunities for students to understand moral concepts in a more contextual manner (Huda, 2023: 121).

Teacher–student interaction also shows significant improvement. The learning process is no longer dominated by lectures but involves dialogue and the exploration of values relevant to students’ social lives. This approach contributes to increased student engagement in the learning process (Suryana, 2021: 66).

#### 4. Product Evaluation

**Table 4. Product Evaluation Component Scores**

| No      | Product Components               | Maximum Score | Obtained Score | Percentage |
|---------|----------------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------|
| 1       | Understanding of Aqidah concepts | 100           | 88             | 88%        |
| 2       | Understanding of moral values    | 100           | 87             | 87%        |
| 3       | Students’ religious behavior     | 100           | 84             | 84%        |
| 4       | Moral reflection ability         | 100           | 86             | 86%        |
| Average |                                  |               | 86.25          | 86%        |

The product evaluation indicates that learning outcomes fall within the very good category with an average score of 86%. Students demonstrate improved understanding of both *Aqidah* concepts and *moral* values taught in the classroom. The competency-based approach enables students to relate *moral* concepts to real social situations in their lives (Anshori, 2020: 205).

The transformation of learning approaches also contributes to strengthening students’ religious behavior. Students demonstrate better *moral* reflection abilities in understanding various ethical issues encountered in daily life. These results indicate that the transformation of learning approaches positively influences students’ character development (Azra, 2021: 94).

#### 5. Recapitulation of CIPP Evaluation Results

**Table 5. Recapitulation of CIPP Evaluation**

| Component | Percentage |
|-----------|------------|
| Context   | 85%        |
| Input     | 81%        |
| Process   | 85%        |
| Product   | 86%        |
| Average   | 84.25%.    |

## Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approach from a content-based orientation in the 2013 Curriculum to a competency-based orientation in the Merdeka Curriculum has generated significant changes in classroom learning practices within the madrasah. These changes are reflected not only in the planning stage of instruction but also in the pedagogical strategies implemented by teachers and the patterns of student engagement during the learning process. The competency-based approach encourages teachers to design learning activities that are more contextual, reflective, and oriented toward the development of students' critical thinking skills as well as the internalization of *moral* and ethical values in everyday life. This shift demonstrates that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides greater flexibility for teachers to develop adaptive learning models that respond to students' needs and the dynamics of the educational environment.

The discussion in this study focuses on the analysis of the evaluation results of the transformation of *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning using the CIPP evaluation model, which consists of the context, input, process, and product dimensions. The analysis of these four components provides a comprehensive overview of institutional readiness, the availability of educational resources, the dynamics of classroom learning implementation, and the learning outcomes achieved by students in strengthening *moral* competencies. Through this evaluative framework, the study identifies both supporting factors and challenges encountered in the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning at the madrasah. The results of this analysis serve as an important foundation for understanding the effectiveness of the transformation of the learning approach and its implications for improving the quality of Islamic religious education at the senior secondary level.

The transformation of *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approaches at *Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Surakarta* indicates a significant shift from a content-based approach toward a competency-based approach. This change is reflected in the shift of learning strategies that emphasize student participation in the learning process. Competency-based learning approaches provide opportunities for students to develop critical thinking skills and gain a deeper understanding of moral values. Dialogical learning strategies allow students to express their perspectives regarding various ethical issues.

This transformation also highlights the importance of teacher readiness in implementing the new curriculum. Teachers' pedagogical competence becomes a crucial factor in determining the success of competency-based learning implementation. Instructional materials designed according to the Merdeka Curriculum also contribute to the effectiveness of the learning process. Contextually designed teaching modules help students understand *moral* values through relevant learning experiences.

Competency-based learning processes provide opportunities for students to develop moral reflection skills. Discussion activities and case studies assist students in understanding ethical issues within social life. Student engagement in the learning process shows significant improvement. Students do not merely receive information passively but actively participate in classroom learning.

Changes in learning approaches also contribute to strengthening students' religious character. Moral values taught during learning activities become easier for students to understand and apply in everyday life. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for madrasahs to develop more flexible and innovative learning

models. Competency-based learning approaches allow teachers to adapt teaching strategies to students' needs.

The research findings indicate that the transformation of learning approaches has a positive impact on the quality of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning. Competency-based learning helps students understand moral concepts more comprehensively. A supportive madrasah environment also plays an important role in the success of curriculum implementation. Institutional support provides opportunities for teachers to develop innovative learning practices.

Changes in the learning paradigm also encourage the strengthening of character education within the process of Islamic religious instruction. The transformation of learning approaches demonstrates that competency-based learning has strong potential to improve the quality of Islamic education in madrasahs.

The discussion of the research findings demonstrates that the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approach from a content-based orientation to a competency-based framework within the *Merdeka* Curriculum represents an important step in strengthening the relevance and effectiveness of Islamic religious education in *madrasah*. The implementation of this new approach encourages a more student-centered learning environment, where the development of moral competence, critical thinking, and reflective understanding becomes a central focus of the instructional process. The evaluation results obtained through the CIPP model reveal that institutional support, teacher readiness, and the availability of learning resources play a crucial role in facilitating the successful implementation of curriculum transformation in *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning.

The findings of this study also highlight the importance of continuous pedagogical adaptation and professional development for teachers in order to optimize the implementation of competency-based learning within the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The transformation process requires not only structural adjustments in curriculum design but also a shift in instructional mindset toward more participatory, contextual, and value-oriented learning practices. The insights derived from this study contribute to the broader discourse on curriculum reform in Islamic education and provide empirical evidence that may serve as a reference for educators, policymakers, and researchers seeking to improve the quality of *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning in madrasah education.

## Conclusion

The conclusion of this study is derived from a comprehensive analysis of the research findings regarding the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approach from the content-based framework of the 2013 Curriculum to the competency-based orientation of the *Merdeka* Curriculum. The analysis highlights the extent to which curriculum transformation influences instructional planning, classroom learning processes, and the development of students' moral competencies in the context of Islamic education at the madrasah level. By synthesizing the results of the evaluation conducted through the CIPP model, this study provides a systematic understanding of how curriculum reform contributes to improving the effectiveness and relevance of *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning in contemporary educational settings.

The concluding section also integrates the main findings related to the context, input, process, and product dimensions of the curriculum implementation. These dimensions offer a holistic perspective on the institutional readiness, the availability of educational resources, the

dynamics of teaching and learning practices, and the outcomes achieved by students in strengthening their moral and ethical understanding. Through this synthesis, the study formulates key conclusions that reflect the impact of the competency-based learning approach within the Merdeka Curriculum and its implications for the development of Islamic religious education in madrasah institutions.

The transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches indicates a significant shift from a content-based approach to a competency-based approach. The context evaluation demonstrates that curriculum policies have high relevance to the development of competency-based learning. The input evaluation indicates that the readiness of educational resources falls within the good category. Teacher competence plays an important role in the successful implementation of competency-based learning. The process evaluation indicates that active learning strategies contribute to increased student engagement.

Discussion-based learning and value reflection activities help students understand moral concepts in a more contextual manner. The product evaluation demonstrates improvement in students' understanding of *Aqidah* concepts and moral values. The transformation of learning approaches positively contributes to the development of students' religious character. The implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum provides opportunities for the development of more innovative learning practices in madrasahs. The transformation of *Aqidah Akhlak* learning approaches contributes to improving the quality of Islamic religious education.

In conclusion, the findings of this study demonstrate that the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approach from a content-based framework within the 2013 Curriculum to a competency-based orientation in the Merdeka Curriculum has contributed to significant improvements in the quality of the learning process at the madrasah level. The shift toward competency-based learning emphasizes the development of students' moral competencies, critical thinking abilities, and reflective understanding of Islamic values. The evaluation conducted through the CIPP model indicates that the effectiveness of this transformation is closely related to the alignment between curriculum policies, institutional readiness, teacher competence, and the availability of learning resources that support meaningful learning experiences.

The study also confirms that the implementation of the Merdeka Curriculum in *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning provides broader opportunities for teachers to design contextual and student-centered instructional strategies that foster the internalization of ethical values in students' daily lives. The results of this research offer important insights for strengthening curriculum implementation in Islamic education institutions, particularly in supporting the development of holistic learning approaches that integrate knowledge, attitudes, and moral practices. These findings are expected to serve as a reference for future educational development and as a basis for further research on competency-based learning in Islamic religious education.

The conclusions of this study are formulated based on a comprehensive synthesis of the research findings concerning the transformation of the *Aqidah Akhlaq* learning approach from the content-based orientation of the 2013 Curriculum to the competency-based framework implemented in the Merdeka Curriculum. The analysis emphasizes how this transformation reshapes instructional design, classroom interaction, and the development of students' moral competencies within the context of Islamic education at the *madrasah* level. By integrating the results of the CIPP evaluation model—covering context, input, process, and product dimensions—this study provides a critical understanding of the effectiveness of curriculum reform in enhancing the quality, relevance, and pedagogical orientation of *Aqidah Akhlaq*

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